

March 6, 2009

WASHINGTON, DC—Today, March 6, 2009, Congressman Ike Skelton (Mo.), Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, announced that Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) has been appointed to a newly formed special panel to address the ongoing challenge of defense acquisition reform. During his time in the Navy and in Congress, Congressman Sestak has clearly articulated the need to overhaul our defense appropriations process. In December 2008, he addressed the Center for American Progress on the need for acquisition reform, outlining the work proposals he developed on the Congressional Roles and Missions Panel a year earlier. The Congressman is already working to institute accountability reform with several amendments within this year's defense authorization bill.

"The President has spoken strongly about the need to reform our defense acquisition process and I support him fully in this effort," said Congressman Sestak. "As Director of Navy Warfare Requirements, overseeing the Navy's \$70 billion warfare development budget, I have seen the flaws of this system firsthand. Too often, the Department of Defense, the defense industry, and Congress operate under a 'tyranny of optimism,' taking the most optimistic – not realistic – approach to budgeting and appropriations. This leads to proposals that are routinely understated and projects that habitually overrun their budgets. Lead times for weapons systems are longer than ever and costs continue to escalate. Services are also paying increasing costs to develop and produce unique weapons systems for the same or similar mission, like the Patriot and SM3 missile defense systems. Acquisition officials appear to change stated and approved acquisition plans without much discipline, thereby increasing costs. It's time to impose a strategic pause – or, at least, review – in defense acquisition so that the Department of Defense can overhaul the process to ensure taxpayers receive a fair value for their dollar and warfighters receive capable systems on time and within budgets."

"We need to institute a more effective and efficient process," the Congressman continued, "utilizing the best within the Defense Department, Congress, and the defense industry as a team that will ensure a more cost-effective military and restore credibility to the process. In these times of economic challenge, we need to be as efficient as possible. Reforms that introduce efficiency and accountability to the process can provide significant savings for taxpayers. I am convinced we can have a more effective as well as more cost-efficient military if we do this right."

In announcing the formation of the new panel, Chairman Skelton said, "Throughout my time in Congress, repeated efforts have been made to improve the federal acquisition process – some successful, some not. In recent years the problems in DOD's acquisition system have been

particularly severe. Significant reforms are once again needed, in part because the acquisition system must change as DOD's needs change. The very talented Members on this panel will put a fresh set of eyes on the problem, and I look forward to their recommendations."

*Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. Congress.*

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